

## **February Talking Points** ***(For Staff Only)***

### ***Barbour Team***

Governor Barbour has put together a blue ribbon team to run state government. We are very proud of the Governor's Executive Council. One thing you'll notice is that half of the people running the Governor's agencies are current or former military officers – that ought to give you some idea of the efficient, no-nonsense approach to running government that the Governor expects. (Examples: Jones, Speed)

### ***Legislative Cooperation***

Members of the Legislature will tell you that it has been many years since a Governor has come to the table offering this much cooperation with the Legislature. Governor Barbour is walking the floors of both chambers on a regular basis – really unheard of for a Governor – and he has already met with the committee leadership in the House and Senate on key issues. The people of Mississippi want more cooperation and less bickering; and that is what Governor Barbour is giving them.

### ***Job Creation***

Job creation is the number one priority of the Barbour Administration. It is a common thread in every initiative. Fighting any tax hikes helps job creation; workforce development initiatives help job creation; enhancing the leadership at MDA helps job creation; improving our recruitment and retaining of quality teachers helps job creation; and reforming our civil justice system helps job creation. Everything we do ultimately comes back to that main goal.

### ***Workforce Development Initiatives***

Governor Barbour sees improving the quality of our workforce as key in recruiting new industries. He is proposing a massive overhaul of Mississippi's workforce development efforts the likes of which the state has never seen. Our workforce development process is too complicated and cumbersome for the workers and the employers and we are going to fix that.

### ***Education Package***

Governor Barbour sees Mississippi's universities and community colleges as important parts of Mississippi's economic development plan. That is why he is recommending they receive \$100 million more than what was recommended by the Legislative Budget Committee.

In K-12 education, the Governor is starting his efforts in the most important place -- with the teacher. We are trying to fix our teacher shortage by enhancing the state's recruitment efforts; changing our retirement system to let more teachers keep teaching; and changing or certification laws so experts in certain fields can teach even though they may not have an education degree.

### ***Tort Reform***

The battle for more tort reform in Mississippi has a new champion: Haley Barbour. The Governor knows first hand that it will be hard to bring more industry to Mississippi until we fix our civil justice system and stop the onslaught of frivolous lawsuits.

### ***Campaign Priorities***

The areas of government that the Governor is recommending receive budget increases over what the LBC recommended are priority issues that he talked about during his campaign – creating more and better jobs (*MDA*), using our universities more in economic development (*IHL*), enhancing workforce development (*IHL/CC*), supporting stronger drug enforcement (*MBN*) and keeping taxes down (*Homestead Exemption*).

### ***Cutting the Deficit in Half***

The most important step toward fixing our budget problem is acknowledging what it actually is. The Governor was one of the first to acknowledge that Mississippi's budget hole is actually over \$700 million – he said during his campaign. With better management, we believe this Administration will cut that budget deficit in half – to \$356 million – in our first year.

### ***Operation: Streamline***

It would have been easy just to accept the LBC recommendation and lay low while others suggested belt-tightening measures – but that's not leadership. Governor Barbour wants his Administration to be an example to the rest of state government on how to run more efficiently.

Not only did we announce our Executive Budget, we also announced the beginning of *Operation: Streamline*. *Operation: Streamline* is a comprehensive efficiency plan that outlines several areas of government where we believe that we can, indeed, do better. Some of it will require help from the Legislature, some will not. But all of *Operation: Streamline* will demonstrate that better management can save money without negatively affecting our citizens. (Examples: Personnel Board, universities' purchasing.)

Our goal is to save \$283 million into 2005. Our hope is that this will just be the beginning in what will be a smarter way to run state government. The business world has rapidly learned how to operate more efficiently. It is time for state government to do the same.

### ***Call to Action***

A Governor in Mississippi is weak constitutionally, but he does have two weapons at his disposal -- one is the veto pen, the other is you. If Governor Barbour can enlist the help of people like you to call or visit your legislator on behalf of his agenda that makes all the difference in the world in getting these things passed into law and giving Mississippi the tools it needs to succeed.